

BQE CORE CUSTOMER CASE STUDY

Shear Structural

Atlanta, GA

25+ Employees

Structural Engineering

shearstructural.com



More Time for Clients. More Clarity for Leadership. More Growth Ahead.



“What used to take each project manager 10 hours a month now takes about 30 minutes. For me, the prep work went from half a day to almost nothing. That change has freed me to focus on running the business instead of chasing invoices.”

Malory Atkinson
Co-Founder and Managing Partner of Shear Structural



Shear Structural: Building Stronger Operations for Greater Impact

A Firm With A Purpose

Shear Structural was founded in 2017 with the vision of creating a firm that combined technical excellence with a broader responsibility to the profession and the community. What began as a three-person startup has grown into a thriving 25+ person practice, earning trust through reliable, forward-thinking solutions.

Today, Shear is proud to stand as Georgia's only 100% woman-owned structural engineering firm. This distinction highlights not only their role as industry leaders but also their commitment to paving the way for greater diversity in a traditionally male-dominated field.

The firm focuses exclusively on structural engineering, specializing in adaptive reuse, healthcare, municipal, and education projects. These sectors align closely with Shear's values, allowing the team to design buildings that are not only structurally sound but also vital to the safety, resilience, and growth of the communities they serve.

Comitment to Community

From the beginning, Shear Structural has measured success not just by the projects it completes, but by the impact it makes in the community. The firm is a proud signatory of *Go Beyond Profit*, pledging to reinvest at least 10% of its profits each year into nonprofit initiatives, sponsorships, and education programs.

One of the most meaningful ways Shear gives back is through pro bono work. Each year, the team takes on at least one fully free project for a nonprofit organization. These projects have included everything from transforming a vacant warehouse into a youth community center to

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Giving back is built into our business. At least 10% of profits go to community service and pro bono work, ensuring our engineering makes a lasting social impact.

Malory Atkinson
Co-Founder and Managing Partner

supporting groups like Boys & Girls Clubs, Meals on Wheels Atlanta, and the Empty Stocking Fund. These efforts provide lasting benefits to communities while allowing the firm to apply its expertise to causes that matter.

This dedication to service is not a side initiative but a core part of Shear's identity. By weaving philanthropy and community engagement into its business model, the firm demonstrates how engineering can strengthen not only buildings, but also the people and neighborhoods that rely on them.

Growing Pains with Disconnected Systems

As Shear Structural grew, the systems that had once supported its operations began to show their limits. In the early years, spreadsheets, QuickBooks, and ClickTime offered a simple way to track time, expenses, and projects. For a three-person startup, these tools were manageable. But as the firm expanded past 15 employees, what once felt lightweight quickly became a burden.

Managing three separate platforms meant hours of manual data entry, broken links in spreadsheets, and an invoicing process that dragged on for days. Project managers were spending up to 10 hours each month just compiling reports, while leadership struggled to piece together a clear picture of project performance, overdue invoices, and unbilled hours. In fact, invoicing became so cumbersome that the firm had to start preparing 10 days in advance just to meet monthly deadlines.

The inefficiencies took a toll on both productivity and profitability. Valuable staff time was consumed by administrative work, while leaders found themselves constantly playing



catch-up instead of focusing on strategy. The lack of integration was frustrating and was holding the firm back from scaling effectively and delivering on its mission.

Choosing a Smarter Path

When it came time to find a better solution, Shear Structural's leadership knew exactly what they wanted to avoid. Having used Deltek in the past, they had firsthand experience with its outdated interface, heavy implementation requirements, and reliance on costly customization. For a growing firm that valued agility and innovation, returning to that type of system was not an option.

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I used Deltek years ago and when I looked at it again five years later, nothing had changed. It felt like they weren't listening to customers or evolving the product. With CORE, I've already seen improvements and updates that respond to feedback. That's what convinced me—this is a platform that keeps getting better.

Malory Atkinson
Co-Founder and Managing Partner

Shear initially tested BQE CORE in 2018 with a single license, but the timing wasn't right for a full transition. By 2024, with the firm's continued growth and operational pressures mounting, the need for change was clear. CORE stood out not only for its ability to consolidate time tracking, expenses, and invoicing, but also for its modern, intuitive design.

Equally important, Shear's leaders saw CORE as a platform that was evolving alongside its customers. Continuous product updates and responsiveness to client feedback signaled a partner invested in long-term success. For a firm that prides itself on innovation, CORE was the right fit to support both immediate needs and future ambitions.

Transforming Operations with CORE

When Shear Structural made the move to BQE CORE, the change was immediate. By consolidating time tracking, expense management, and invoicing into a single platform, the firm eliminated the inefficiencies of juggling multiple disconnected systems. Processes that once consumed entire days of staff and leadership time were reduced to a fraction of the effort.

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By eliminating 10 days of lead time in our invoicing cycle, CORE sped up billing, improved cash flow, and ensured no billable hours slip through the cracks. Leadership now has the time and clarity to focus on clients and project performance.

Malory Atkinson
Co-Founder and Managing Partner

Key improvements include:

- **Invoicing efficiency:** Project managers went from spending 10 hours each month compiling reports to just 30 minutes, while leadership eliminated about 5 hours of prep work entirely.
- **Faster Billing Cycles:** The firm no longer needs to start preparing invoices 10 days in advance just to meet deadlines, reducing delays and ensuring invoices go out on time.
- **Higher billable utilization:** By reclaiming 9+ hours per month per project manager, CORE freed up time for client work, directly boosting utilization.
- **Financial clarity:** Real-time visibility into unbilled time, overdue invoices, and project profitability allows leadership to follow up faster and reduce the risk of delayed receivables, strengthening cash flow.



- **Revenue protection:** CORE eliminated the “lost time” problem that existed before, when hours sometimes slipped through unbilled. Now every billable hour is tracked and invoiced.
- **Error reduction:** Standardized project setup and templates prevent mistakes that previously required rework, saving both time and money.
- **Scalability:** The system now supports a team of over 25 people with processes that can grow as the firm expands, replacing tools that broke down once they surpassed about 15 employees.

Together, these improvements have given Shear Structural greater efficiency, stronger financial insight, and renewed confidence in its ability to scale. By freeing staff from administrative burdens and providing leadership with the clarity they need, CORE has elevated business performance and positioned the firm to focus on delivering exceptional engineering and expanding its community impact.

Positioned for Growth

With CORE now streamlining day-to-day operations, Shear Structural has shifted its focus from simply keeping up to actively planning ahead. Leadership now has the clarity to analyze project performance, track client payments, and make informed decisions without being weighed down by administrative bottlenecks.

Looking forward, the firm is preparing to expand its use of CORE into CRM and opportunity tracking. Because structural engineers often submit multiple proposals for the same project to different architects, managing business development efficiently is critical. CORE will allow Shear to track opportunities in one place,



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CORE isn't just solving today's challenges. It's a platform we can grow into. Our next step is opportunity tracking, which will streamline the multiple proposals we submit for each project and give us the visibility to see what converts into wins. That scalability is what will take us to the next level as a business.

Malory Atkinson
Co-Founder and Managing Partner

eliminate duplicate efforts, and better understand which pursuits convert into wins.

This forward-looking mindset underscores how CORE has become more than just a tool for solving past problems. It is a platform that positions Shear Structural to scale. They have the operational foundation to grow their business, deepen their community commitments, and deliver even greater impact in the years ahead.

A Stronger Future

Shear Structural's journey shows how the right tools can transform a firm. By replacing spreadsheets and disconnected systems with CORE, they unlocked measurable efficiencies, gave project managers time back for client work, and created the financial clarity needed to grow with confidence.

The results are not unique to Shear. Any firm facing the same challenges—manual invoicing, scattered data, or limited visibility



into profitability—can benefit from the same transformation. CORE eliminates the guesswork, streamlines operations, and ensures every hour and every dollar is accounted for.

For leaders who want to scale their business, strengthen cash flow, and focus on the work that matters most, Shear's experience is proof of what's possible. CORE doesn't just improve operations—it gives firms the clarity and control to build a stronger, more sustainable future.

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With CORE, we have the tools to scale our firm, strengthen our performance, and expand the impact we make in our community.

Malory Atkinson
Co-Founder and Managing Partner

Build a business that runs as smoothly as your designs, powered by BQE CORE.

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